

and Western empires had entered into the field, and the situation for Roger became one of great danger.

The King had himself sought for a *rapprochement* with Constantinople. Early in 1143, he sent an embassy to the Greek capital asking the hand of a princess of the blood for one of his sons. The negotiations were delayed by the death of the Basileus John (8th April, 1143), but the new Emperor, Manuel, soon after his accession, despatched the ambassador Basil Xeros to revive the project of the marriage. Roger, however, sought for a ratification of his royal title; it was refused, and the Sicilian envoys in Constantinople were cast into prison. Neither of the ancient empires would treat the new King as anything more than an outlaw, and in place of this suggested marriage, a family alliance between the two imperial houses, which had been in the air since 1140, was taken up once more. Finally, early in 1146, the envoy Nicephorus came to Conrad's court, and the espousal of Bertha of Salzbach, sister-in-law of the King, to the gallant and talented Emperor Manuel was finally arranged. Robert of Capua and Roger of Ariano, two of Roger II. 's bitterest foes, escorted the lady to

Constantinople, where, as the Princess Irene, she married the Basileus (the week after Epiphany, 1146).

The marriage alliance had the King of Sicily in view; it was accompanied with a declaration